



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 2, 2021

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Yearlong poaching investigation ends with four convictions

A routine inspection of local taxidermy operations in Buchanan and Linn counties began a yearlong investigation into poaching activity and ended with four individuals being charged and convicted of dozens of wildlife violations as well as facing thousands of dollars in fines and civil damages.

Evidence from the taxidermy inspection, in addition to interviews of those involved culminated in multiple conservation officers executing four search warrants during January 2020, for the cell phones and residences of Jason Webster, 41, of Quasqueton, and Jeremiah Pillard, 42, of Troy Mills.

As a result, Webster faced multiple criminal charges of illegally taking wild turkey, abandoning dead or injured white tailed deer, and 19 other criminal violations involving deer, furbearing animals and fraudulent use of licenses and tags in Buchanan and Linn counties. The civil damages requested as reimbursement from Webster for the value of the wildlife totaled \$15,550. Among the civil damages, Webster is also responsible for the associated criminal fines relevant to the individual charges.

Webster's hunting privileges are suspended indefinitely until all civil damages are paid. He also received a three-year multiple offender license suspension and a five-year court ordered license suspension. In addition, the court condemned all the equipment used in committing the violations, including the guns, hunting blinds, traps and trapping equipment, a crossbow, knives, multiple deer racks, deer meat and more.

Pillard pleaded guilty in Linn County to illegal taking wild turkey, white tailed deer, rabbit, and for being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm. The civil damages requested as reimbursement from Pillard for the value of the wildlife totaled \$6,750. Among the civil damages, Pillard is also responsible for the associated criminal fines relevant to the individual charges. Pillard was also sentenced to five years in prison, with all five years being suspended and was placed on two years of probation.

Pillard's hunting privileges are suspended indefinitely until all civil damages are paid. He received a three-year multiple offender license suspension as well. In addition, the court condemned Pillard's Benjamin Bulldog air rifle and scope, turkey parts, deer meat and a 12-point deer skull.

Webster and Pillard's Iowa poaching activity took place between October 2019 and January 2020. Iowa officials are working with fish and game officials from the western U.S. to determine the origin and method of take of an elk found in Pillard's freezer.

Also pleading guilty in the case were Kelly Sherrets McCardle, 52, of rural Quasqueton, to illegally providing her deer tags to other hunters to use, and Shelia Kisner, 36, of Quasqueton, to hunting without a valid hunting license, habitat fee and deer tag. Kisner was warned for harassment a public officer.

Proposed Boone River water trail extension topic of Feb. 10 virtual public meeting

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Boone River Watershed Management Authority are hosting a virtual public meeting on Feb. 10, at 6 p.m., to discuss a proposal to extend the Boone River Water Trail from its current position in Webster City north to the Wright-Hancock County line. To sign up, go to bit.ly/3ovTQYG.

The Boone River Water Trail currently runs from Webster City to the confluence with the Des Moines River in the southern portion of the Boone River Watershed.

"If you fish, paddle, or tube the Boone River, or engage in other recreational activities along the Boone River, we'd like your input," said John Wenck, water trails coordinator for the Iowa DNR.

He encouraged users to complete an online [Boone River survey](#) on the river itself that will help determine the next steps in the process. The survey will be open through March 3.

For more information, contact Wenck at john.wenck@dnr.iowa.gov or Alyssa Tenorio with JEO Consulting Group at atenorio@jeo.com.

Application process for Trees for Kids program now open

DES MOINES – The popular Trees for Kids grant program is now accepting applications through Friday, March 5.

Grantees can be awarded up to \$2,500 to cover the cost of trees and mulch. All trees for this program must be planted on public property and involve youth education.

The following counties align with federal grant requirements and will receive first preference: Pottawattamie, Cass, Mills, Montgomery, Fremont, and Page, but all

applications are welcome from across the state and grants will be awarded outside of these priority counties as well.

To apply for the grant, visit: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Educational-Opportunities>.

Media contact: Gabriele Edwards, DNR Urban Forestry Program, (515) 822-1031, Gabriele.Edwards@dnr.iowa.gov

Learn to Hunt program opens registration for virtual turkey hunting courses

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering a two-part virtual turkey hunting course to individuals who have little to no turkey hunting experience or would like to further improve their current skills.

"If you haven't turkey hunted at all or are looking to sharpen your skills, then these are the courses for you," said, Jamie Cook program coordinator with the Iowa DNR.

Staff with the Iowa DNR and members of the National Wild Turkey Federation will be providing the instruction for both courses.

Join online for two evenings of all thing's turkey hunting. During the first course, participants will have the chance to learn turkey history, habitat, behavior, regulations, safety and gear. During the second course, participants will have the chance to learn skills such as strategies, tactics, calling, field dressing and cooking recipes. Both courses will have knowledge staff and volunteers leading the course and participants will have the chance to ask questions.

The courses are geared for participants age 16 and older. Those under 16 must have an adult register and participate in the course as well. Space is limited so early registration is encouraged.

Courses are scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m. on March 16 and March 23. For more information and to begin the registration process go to:

March 16: Virtual Learn to Hunt Turkey Workshop - Part 1
[tinyurl.com/axd43rnehttps://license.gooutdoorsiowa.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx?id=1740](https://license.gooutdoorsiowa.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx?id=1740)

March 23: Virtual Learn to Hunt Turkey Workshop - Part 2
<https://license.gooutdoorsiowa.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx?id=1741>

The program is provided through the Iowa DNR, Pheasants Forever and the National Wild Turkey Federation. It is part of a national effort to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters and anglers due to the overall decline in hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation.

Media Contact: Jamie Cook, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 859-779-0222.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is working with state and local officials to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and has transitioned employees to work remotely. DNR offices are closed to the public during this time and only available by appointment.

In other efforts to further reduce the spread of Covid-19, the DNR is encouraging the use of the online services for purchasing licenses, submitting applications, payments and other daily tasks and interaction with DNR staff.

The FREE Go Outdoors Iowa app is available at the App store and Google Play. The Go Outdoors Iowa app allows users to purchase and view hunting and fishing licenses and submit harvest and quota reports, all from your cell phone.

Full list of DNR's online services: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/about-dnr/about-dnr/online-services-databases>.

Up-to-date information on DNR services, facilities and events impacted by Covid-19: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/Covid-19>.

Technical information for regulated businesses in regards to Covid-19: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/Social-Media-Press-Room/Disaster-Assistance#3057321-covid---19-outbreak>.

Thank you for your patience and flexibility during this time. If you need to contact DNR staff you can reach them by email or phone or by calling (515) 725-8200.